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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Pedagogical Accompaniment as a Strategy for Teacher Professional Development: An Opportunity to Improve the Quality of Education

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Received: Apr 20, 2024 | Pedagogical support in the classroom is currently a tool that contributes significantly to teachers' professional development, which |
| Accepted: Aug 12, 2024 | has had a boost through the policies of the Chilean Ministry of Education, being a strategy that should be used by management teams |
| Keywords Pedagogical Accompaniment | and teachers in the learning communities of educational establishments. The objective of the study was to compare the perceptions of managers (principals and heads of the Technical-Pedagogical Unit) and teachers regarding the pedagogical |
| Teacher professional development | accompaniment and feedback implemented in educational |
| Professional learning communities | establishments of a private subsidized provider. The non-experimental study was conducted under a quantitative methodological approach, at a descriptive-comparative level and with a cross-sectional design. The |
| Managers | sample consisted of 86 principals and 329 teachers from elementary |
| Teachers | schools and high schools in the region of La Araucanía and Los Ríos. Data collection was by means of a questionnaire of evaluation of the |
| Theoretical-practical reflection | pedagogical accompaniment. The main results showed significant differences in the perceptions of professional competencies (p=.002) and collaborative learning (p=.009) between principals and teachers. |
| *Corresponding Author: | This indicates that managers tend to value the development of |
| lorenajarat@gmail.com | professional competencies and collaborative learning more positively compared to teachers. |

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, different researches have argued that, among the different variables that influence the improvement of educational quality, teacher performance is positioned as a high impact factor directly related to student learning (Apablaza and Lira, 2013; Aravena et al, 2022; Carrasco-Aguilar et al., 2023; Carrillo-López and Hortigüela-Alcalá, 2023; Escribano, 2018; Leiva-Guerrero and Vásquez, 2019). In this sense, teacher professional development in Chile is within the continuous and permanent improvement approach, which is linked to the work trajectory of each teacher, but it has weaknesses as a state policy, because it consists of teacher pigeonholing through accountability and evaluative mechanisms that generate tensions between the regulatory role of the state and the development opportunities of teachers (Carrasco-Aguilar and Ortiz, 2020).

Pedagogical practices have maintained a traditional logic, focused on the isolated occupation of teachers with their peers, being necessary to overcome this way of working by generating collaboration inside and outside the classroom (Johnston, 2023). In this regard, in Chile in 2016 the law that creates the Teacher Professional Development System was enacted, in which collaborative work is raised as one of the axes with the greatest impact on the professional development of teachers, through reflection and dialogue between peers (Hernández, 2019). The above, brings with it a series of benefits associated with the development of more inclusive teaching and learning processes, improvement in the quality of learning, increase in the levels of cooperation among teachers (Meyer et al., 2020; Rodríguez and Ossa, 2014). It should be noted that for an optimal development of collaborative work it is necessary that those who develop this type of tasks are in a state of equality of conditions, where it is understood that there is no single expert to follow, but rather, all the teachers of the team must contribute to meet the proposed objective (Aparicio and Sepúlveda, 2019), thus allowing the professional development of teachers that begins from personal growth to group growth (Yévenes-Márquez et al., 2023).

In this context, pedagogical accompaniment has become a tool and at the same time a challenge, which can be a strategy that contributes to the development of teaching competencies, which must be worked in cohesion for its development (Arellano et al., 2022; Galán, 2017). The above allows an environment of harmony and effective communication inside and outside the classroom in terms of improving teaching and learning processes (Abanto, 2021; Limongi-Vélez, 2022).

Classroom observation as a tool for teacher professional development has become a key factor in the continuous improvement of teaching. This practice has gained significance in recent years because it provides a valuable space for both personal and guided reflection. By allowing an external look at one's own work, teachers could identify strengths and areas for improvement in a more objective way (Ulloa and Gajardo, 2016). One of the most relevant aspects of classroom observation is its ability to strengthen educational practices (Bakieva et al., 2019). By receiving constructive feedback from colleagues or experts, teachers can adjust their teaching strategies, improve classroom management, enhance motivation and learning of their students (Cantillo and Gregorio, 2021). In addition, this tool facilitates the recognition of good practices that can be shared and applied by other teachers, fostering a collaborative and peer learning environment (Arriagada and Calzadilla, 2018).

Strengthening the competencies of learning mediators, i.e., teachers, has become an imperative need in the current educational context (Rosales et al., 2022). The rapid evolution of society and the constant transformation of information and communication technologies (ICT) have significantly impacted the current dynamics of teaching and learning and affect the necessary updating of educational practices in order to provide relevant and effective classes (Leiva-Guerrero and Vásquez, 2019). In this sense, teacher professional development has become increasingly relevant nationally and internationally (Navarro, 2020). Likewise, educational institutions have recognized the importance of collaborative work and continuous teacher training (Azpillaga et al., 2021). Therefore, it is important to strengthen the competencies of those who work as learning mediators. However, for some years now, teacher professional development has taken an important position at national and international level due to its direct relationship with changes in pedagogical practices and reflective processes (De la Vega, 2021; Porras, 2020).

One of the most effective ways to accelerate professional development is pedagogical accompaniment, through observation and feedback. If carried out in a systematic and sustained manner, these instances tend to have a direct and sustained impact over time on teaching practices and, therefore, on student learning (Agreda and Pérez, 2020; Lara et al., 2022; MINEDUC, 2021a;).

This type of strategy is part of the guiding frameworks of Chile's educational policies, specifically developed through the Curriculum and Evaluation Unit, through the Indicative Performance Standards for Schools and their Administrators (MINEDUC, 2021b). In the Pedagogical Management

Dimension, which guides the coordination, planning, monitoring and evaluation of the teaching-learning process, it is stated that the management and pedagogical technical team accompanies teachers through observation and feedback of classes, guiding the brief and frequent accompaniment focused on the installation of agreed practices, emphasizing the importance of conducting a feedback where the achievements and challenges of the practices are analyzed and reflected upon in order to then agree on concrete actions for improvement (MINEDUC, 2021b).

Therefore, it is important to consider that pedagogical accompaniment, "is the central strategy that provides technical and affective support (emotional-ethical and effective) to promote the process of change in teachers' practices" (Leiva and Vásquez, 2019, p. 230). In this sense, teachers' professional development is enriched through accompaniment, dialogue and constant reflection of the teacher from their pedagogical practice in the classroom (Leiva-Guerrero and Vásquez, 2019). The above is supported by the so-called professional learning communities, which is defined as a space characterized by collaboration, which gives prominence to teachers to work together in the design, analysis, and development of teaching and learning processes (García-Martínez et al., 2018).

This new paradigm has been moving from a vertical supervision approach, aimed at the observation of teaching performance by a member of the management team, to a model that evidences a complex process that has multiple benefits, both for the teacher and for the students and the accompanying person (Escudero, 2019). This last view of accompaniment should not be a practice that is developed sporadically in the educational establishment, nor should it be developed without prior planning and organization. It should be a systematic, continuous and comprehensive implementation, which should be developed under a critical reflective approach that allows the improvement of educational practices implemented in the classroom, visualizing accompaniment as a formative and change process (Leiva-Guerrero and Vásquez, 2019).

The Teacher Professional Development policy established by Law 2903 of 2016 explicitly states the importance of pedagogical support. This allows identifying pedagogical practices, and visualizing how they affect learning, being the accompaniment a key strategy to provide support from the pedagogical feedback and reflection, allowing a redirection of the teaching work in the classroom (Ulloa and Gajardo, 2016). Its objective is to systematize the observed practices and that these can serve as input to provide feedback and guide the reflection focused on improving them (Ulloa and Gajardo, 2016). On the other hand, within this process, feedback emerges as an important element to guide teachers in the development of new pedagogical strategies that promote student learning, and at the same time allow them to progress professionally (Ulloa and Gajardo, 2016). In short, for Escudero (2019 cited in Aravena et al., 2022), pedagogical accompaniment is a mechanism that allows learning and exchange between the observer and the observed, which should develop in a harmonious and symmetrical way.

For this strategy to achieve changes in the teaching work, depending on each educational context and reality, it must be conceived from an organizational culture that is based on collaborative work, which is a facilitator for the improvement of pedagogical and professional practices, which jointly converges with the improvement in learning (Aparicio and Sepúlveda, 2019).

Likewise, the pedagogical accompaniment must be a process of reciprocal learning and collaboration, in which they are supported in a concrete way, through the process of information and establishment of common parameters, which allows them to develop competencies at the individual and collective level characterized by horizontal relationships, in which respect and collaboration converge, relevant to the dynamics of teacher development (Galán, 2017).

In accordance with the above, the pedagogical accompaniment carried out in educational centers is fundamental to improve the quality of teaching and learning. This process involves providing support, guidance and follow-up to teachers in their professional practice, with the aim of promoting

their professional development and improving the educational outcomes of students, which is made effective through its effective implementation (Limongi-Vélez, 2022). In this sense, pedagogical accompaniment is characterized by being a continuous process over time and personalized. It is not limited to the mere supervision or evaluation of teaching work, but involves a reflective dialogue between the accompanier and the teacher, where experiences are shared, strengths and areas for improvement are identified, and professional development strategies are designed (Rosales-Veitia et al., 2022). In this context, and even though there is abundant information on the importance of coaching and its contribution to the reconstruction of more effective practices, this action is felt by teachers in a top-down manner and as mere supervision.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study is a quantitative, non-experimental, descriptive-comparative, cross-sectional design, which assessed the pedagogical accompaniment of principals, UTP and teachers of a sustaining institution distributed in the regions of Biobío, Araucanía and Los Ríos. The study aimed to assess through a Likert scale questionnaire (Aravena et al., 2022) information regarding the permanent updating, classroom performance and feedback of the process of principals, heads of the Technical-Pedagogical Unit and teachers in the regions of Biobío, Araucanía and Los Ríos.

Sample

Principals, heads of technical-pedagogical units and teachers from a total of 67 educational establishments in the regions of La Araucanía and Los Ríos, Chile, participated in this study by means of a non-probabilistic convenience sampling.

Table 1: Study participants

| Participants | N | % |
|--------------|-----|------|
| Directors | 35 | 8.4 |
| UTP Heads | 51 | 12.3 |
| Teachers | 329 | 79.3 |
| Total | 415 | 100 |

Note. Own elaboration

Instruments

Data collection was carried out by applying the questionnaire Valoración del acompañamiento pedagógico en el aula by Aravena et al. (2022). The instrument is composed of 3 dimensions and 15 items developed with Likert-type response options, with a scale of 1 to 5, in which 1 is equal to strongly disagree, and 5 is equal to strongly agree. The structure of the applied questionnaire is presented below:

Table 2. Dimensions of the questionnaire for evaluating the pedagogical accompaniment in the classroom.

| Dimension | Definition | Quantity |
|---------------------------|---|----------|
| Professional competencies | Set of resources, knowledge, skills and | 5 |
| | attitudes needed by teachers to | |
| | satisfactorily resolve the situations | |
| | they face in their professional work. | |
| Collaborative learning | A process in which teachers share | 5 |
| | experiences and knowledge in order to | |

| | improve their own practices and those of their colleagues. | |
|-----------------------|--|---|
| Educational practices | Deliberate practice that teachers develop in the classroom, in presence and interaction with their students to favor their learning. | 5 |

Note. Taken from Aravena et al. (2022).

Statistical analysis.

Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 21.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the Levene test were used to evaluate the normal distribution of the data and the homogeneity of variances, respectively. Continuous variables were expressed as means and standard deviation and categorical variables as frequencies and percentages. Differences in the comparison between groups were determined with Student's t-test and the Mann-Whitney U test as appropriate. Cohen's d was used to establish the effect size in the comparison of the dimensions of professional competencies, collaborative learning and educational practices (Aravena et al., 2022).

RESULTS

The following are the results obtained from the questionnaire on the perception of pedagogical support (Aravena et al., 2022), applied to principals and teachers of elementary and secondary schools in the regions of Araucanía and Los Ríos, Chile.

Table 3: Difference in the dimensions of competencies, learning and practices.

| | Managers N=86 | | Teachers N=329 | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|------|-------------------|------|------|------|
| Dimensions | M | DE | M | DE | р | d |
| Professional competencies | 3,40 | 0,66 | 3,18 | 0,72 | ,002 | 0,32 |
| Collaborative learning | 3,35 | 0,64 | 3,16 | 0,72 | ,009 | 0,26 |
| Educational practices | 3,40 | 0,63 | 3,25 | 0,74 | ,078 | 0,07 |

Note: Own elaboration

Regarding the dimensions of the study, the results revealed significant differences in the perceptions of professional competencies (p=.002) and collaborative learning (p=.009), between these two groups (Table 3).

Managers showed a significantly higher mean on professional competencies (M=3.40, SD=0.66) compared to teachers (M=3.18, SD=0.72, p=.002). This suggests that managers have a more positive perception of their professional competencies relative to teachers.

In relation to collaborative learning, a significant difference was observed between managers (M=3.35; SD=.64) and teachers (M=3.26; SD=.72, p=.009. This indicates that managers tend to value collaborative learning more positively compared to teachers. In the educational practices dimension, there were no statistically significant differences (p=.078).

Table 4. Descriptive analysis of the dimension: professional competencies

| | Managers N=86 | | Teachers N=329 | | |
|---|------------------|------|-------------------|------|------|
| Variables | M | DE | M | DE | p |
| Permanently updating the professional knowledge of teachers | 3,22 | 0,80 | 3,12 | 0,84 | ,317 |

| Obtain useful information about teaching performance in the classroom. | 3,53 | 0,75 | 3,21 | 0,78 | ,001 |
|--|------|------|------|------|------|
| It allows for a reflective process regarding teaching practices. | 3,59 | 0,73 | 3,24 | 0,80 | ,001 |
| Mobilize beliefs regarding the teaching-learning process. | 3,24 | 0,75 | 3,09 | 0,78 | ,113 |
| Improving confidence in professional capabilities | 3,43 | 0,76 | 3,22 | 0,81 | ,034 |

Note: Own elaboration

In relation to the questions of the professional competencies dimension, there were statistically significant differences in the variables "Obtain useful information about teaching performance in the classroom" (p=.001); "Enable a reflective process regarding teaching practices" (p=.001); and "Improve confidence in professional skills" (p=.034) (Table 4).

Table 5: Descriptive analysis dimension: Collaborative learning

| | Managers N=86 | | Teachers N=329 | | |
|--|------------------|------|-------------------|------|------|
| Variables | M | DE | M | DE | р |
| Provide timely feedback from the management team. | 3,47 | 0,73 | 3,13 | 0,85 | ,001 |
| Maintain trusting relationships with members of the management team. | 3,34 | 0,78 | 3,21 | 0,79 | ,168 |
| Investigate collaboratively with their teaching peers about effective teaching strategies. | 3,19 | 0,74 | 3,09 | 0,84 | ,314 |
| Provide feedback on peer-to-peer teaching-learning strategies. | 3,31 | 0,71 | 3,05 | 0,81 | ,006 |
| Work in a climate of professional respect with their teaching peers. | 3,45 | 0,78 | 3,33 | 0,79 | ,190 |

Note: Own elaboration

In relation to the questions of the collaborative learning dimension, there were statistically significant differences in the variables "Provide timely feedback from the management team" (p=.001); and "Provide feedback on teaching-learning strategies among peers" (p=.006) (Table 5).

Table 6: Descriptive analysis dimension: Educational Practices

| | Managers | | Teachers | | |
|--|----------|------|----------|------|------|
| | N=86 | | N=329 | | |
| Variables | M | DE | M | DE | p |
| Contextualize teaching according to student interest. | 3,40 | 0,69 | 3,25 | 0,79 | ,113 |
| Enhance collaboration among students in the classroom. | 3,30 | 0,75 | 3,24 | 0,79 | ,514 |
| Maintain a classroom climate conducive to learning. | 3,40 | 0,79 | 3,32 | 0,75 | ,407 |
| Encourage the process of learning feedback. | 3,47 | 0,73 | 3,26 | 0,79 | ,029 |
| Diversify strategies to assess learning. | 3,44 | 0,68 | 3,21 | 0,81 | ,013 |

Note: Own elaboration

In relation to the questions of the educational practices dimension, there were statistically significant differences in the variables "Favor the learning feedback process" (p=.029); and "Diversify strategies to evaluate learning" (p=.013) (Table 6). (p=.013) (Table 6).

DISCUSSION

With respect to the main results, in general, there are significant differences in the perception of principals and teachers regarding professional competencies and collaborative work in relation to pedagogical support, with principals attributing greater importance to pedagogical support. (2021) who argue that pedagogical coaching is a key strategy to strengthen teacher performance effectively (Gupta and Verma, 2021), as well as in the pedagogical practice, seeking to create a harmonious classroom environment and effective communication between the coach and the coached. In relation to the above, a perception of asymmetric classroom pedagogical accompaniment is visualized, which means that the participation of teachers is only linked to the process of the accompanied, while the director and head of the Technical-Pedagogical Unit are seen as the experts and exercise control over the pedagogical accompaniment. In this area, Aravena et al. (2022) affirms that "teachers perceive accompaniment as a supervision and control mechanism that contributes little to the reflection and improvement of their practices" (p. 236). Likewise, an asymmetrical perception of pedagogical accompaniment can be glimpsed, where teachers assume only the role of being accompanied, while managers are positioned as experts and exercise control over the process. This verticalist vision coincides with what has been pointed out by various authors (Guzmán et al., 2023; Limongi-Vélez, 2022; Sevilla et al., 2022; Ushiña and Colmenarez, 2022;), who warn that these practices are insufficient to achieve a substantial improvement in teaching practices and, therefore, in student learning. On the other hand, Svendsen (2020) mentions that teacher professional development must be of high quality to be attractive and perceived as valuable. Likewise, Kilag and Sasan (2023) emphasize the importance of leaders developing effective leadership practices that provide feedback, facilitate collaboration and opportunities for improvement of teaching practices.

In relation to the above, the study establishes that collaborative work is an important tool for pedagogical support, but establishing as a regular rule the existence of asymmetrical relationships regarding support, which makes it complex to promote collaborative learning with these negative perceptions regarding classroom support. Svendsen (2016) indicates that teachers who work collaboratively perceive a clear effect on their teaching practice and their ways of thinking about teaching, strategies such as pedagogical accompaniment among peers and other collaborative practices visualize a positive effect on teachers' attitudes towards collaboration. In this sense, the authors Aravena et al. (2022) propose that in classroom accompaniment there should be a culture of collaboration for the construction of new knowledge and effective pedagogical practices. For this to materialize, "the school director must possess attitudes and skills that allow the development of the institution, demonstrating the ability to reorient the negative aspects that are unfavorable in order to comply with institutional and educational policies" (Valverde et al., 2022, p. 4740).

Managers value pedagogical accompaniment, from what it can provide for the improvement of educational practices, the development of collaborative work, professional competencies and how these are related to learning. López (2023) states that classroom pedagogical support is significantly related to teaching and learning, which means that the better the training process is, the better the results with respect to teaching and learning will be.

In relation to professional competencies, there is a positive evaluation by managers and teachers, despite the fact that in this dimension there is a greater difference between the perceptions of both groups surveyed. It is important to highlight that it is necessary to strengthen one aspect of this dimension, which is related to the critical reflection of teachers that allows the accompaniment process, being reflection an important element to develop between managers and teachers, providing systematic accompaniment and spaces for reflection for teacher development. In this sense, several

studies converge in that it is necessary for the accompaniment process to guarantee in the feedback after the accompaniment, teacher reflection, to raise or unify the pertinent orientations, in relation to reflection, because there is guidance through an instrument, but there are no clear guidelines for the feedback and reflection process, in order to guarantee that this allows a critical and real analysis of the practice itself (Burga, 2021; Chipana, 2021; Flores, 2023).

In the collaborative learning dimension, as in the previous dimension, there is a positive perception of all the participants of the study, in which there are important aspects to consider, which are related to the trust that exists between the accompanied teacher and his/her management team, which affects the validation and willingness of the teacher in the process of reflection and adjustment of classroom practices, so it is necessary to build relationships of trust prior to the accompaniment processes. Peña Ruz (2023) states, "that perceptions are positive with respect to peer relationships when sharing their practices, however, there is a lack of spaces for accompaniment, observation and feedback among peers that allow deepening collective learning" (p. 1).

In the third dimension denominated educational practices, there is a positive evaluation by the respondents and this is the dimension that shows the least difference between the responses of managers and teachers. One of them is the evaluation of how accompaniment in the classroom interferes in strengthening the contextualization of teaching in relation to the students' interests, identifying from the design of teaching the characteristics, the context and the interests of the students, giving meaning and relevance to the learning process. The second relevant aspect is the incidence of classroom accompaniment in the feedback process of student learning, being necessary to emphasize the process, during and after classroom accompaniment for effective development in learning (Kilag and Sasan, 2023; Luna, 2023; Munna, 2021; Zajda, 2021). For Reyes and Azanhuanche (2020) "The reflective practice that teachers develop during their exercise and interaction with their students put into practice a set of analysis and assessment activities before, during and after these pedagogical actions" (p. 2019). Finally, through their perception, teachers understand pedagogical accompaniment (Taveras-Sánchez, 2023) as a formative strategy (Bustos et al., 2023), associated with pedagogical practices and observable experiences, which contribute to reflection and collaborative learning among teachers, allowing the transformation of teaching-learning processes (Reyes and Azanhuanche, 2020).

CONCLUSION

This study has been developed in various dimensions and practices related to pedagogical accompaniment, professional development and educational practices in the context of education, analyzing the perceptions and practices of managers and teachers, in which crucial points have been identified that can guide improvement strategies in educational institutions.

First, there is a clear difference in the perception of professional competencies between managers and teachers. Managers show a more positive and higher perception in this aspect, which suggests a more marked awareness of the importance of keeping updated and continuously improving their professional knowledge and skills. This difference could be an opportunity to implement specific professional development programs that address the specific needs of teachers and promote constant improvement in their educational practices.

In relation to the above, it is essential to highlight the central role played by pedagogical coaching, recognizing its potential to strengthen teaching practices, promote collaborative work and improve student learning. However, some limitations and challenges are also identified in the effective implementation of accompaniment, such as the asymmetrical relationships perceived by teachers, where managers are seen as experts and controllers of the accompaniment process.

To overcome these barriers, it is crucial to foster a culture of collaboration and trust among all educational actors. The literature reviewed highlights the importance of pedagogical accompaniment

based on horizontal relationships, where both the person accompanying and the person being accompanied actively participate in the process of reflection, analysis and improvement of educational practices. This collaboration should be supported by institutional policies that promote spaces for dialogue, feedback and shared learning between managers and teachers.

Another important aspect that emerges from the results is the need to strengthen teachers' critical reflection as an integral part of the pedagogical accompaniment process. Reflection not only implies analyzing one's own practice, but also questioning, evaluating and transforming beliefs and conceptions about the teaching-learning process. This requires providing teachers with spaces and tools for a deep and meaningful reflection that goes beyond the mere superficial reflection of pedagogical practices and allows for a broader understanding of the educational context and the needs of students.

Regarding collaborative learning, its importance as a tool for professional development and improvement of educational practices is highlighted. The results show a positive perception of all participants regarding collaborative learning, although the need to strengthen trust and collaboration between teachers and managers to enhance its impact is pointed out. This implies creating spaces for the exchange of experiences, knowledge and strategies among peers, as well as promoting a culture of learning and continuous training.

Finally, educational practices are a fundamental aspect that directly influences the quality of the teaching-learning process. Although a positive assessment is observed in general, it is necessary to deepen specific aspects such as the contextualization of teaching according to the students' interests and the effective feedback of learning. Pedagogical support can play a crucial role in strengthening these practices, providing guidance and resources for teachers to design meaningful and relevant learning experiences for their students according to the context. Finally, pedagogical accompaniment serves as a bridging tool to support teachers' careers in teacher professional development.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST. The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest

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